

Sleeping on a Sealyham

Sleeping on a Sealyham is like sleeping on a dog.
Her name, you see, was Margo Sealyham.
And one whole season it was terribly funny.
Except perhaps to Margo.

It was the year the crowd was playing Typical.
In that game there's a Typical:
"She's a typical little housewife,"
And the Antiphon: "Oh, I know -- an alcoholic."
A Typical: "She's the kind who wears white gloves
and pique collars." And the Chorus:
"Oh, yes, of course, a call girl."
Those are two that I remember.

If one were clever they could build.
Some nights we had Triple Typicals
and Typicals that turned and bit their tails.

For we are nothing if not clever.
neatly segregating camp into its highs and lows.
able to define a wine: "a rather pleasant claret
imported ... from the Coast;" deflate a pose.
certain that the bearded have weak chins.
and that the Schweitzer-syndrome, like Gert's rose,
is self-explanatory.

"Shall we sit outside," he said,
"and watch the astronauts assault Diana?"
"Or will this candle-glow, unbusheled here, suffice?"
We left the terrace to the insects and the sentimental.
Inside, at least, there were no violins.
and the tablecloth went mercifully unchecked.
We had a rather pleasant claret (imported from the --
Yes.)
and ribs as rare as courage in the clergy.

(As-Rare-As is another game we play.
The rules are economical and clear.
It must be rare, and must alliterate,
like talent in a teacher,
or monogamy among Americans.)

He raised his glass. "How do I love thee?
Let me count the ways. From one through sixty-nine."
I smiled. Laughter would have been excessive.
And said, "I think your gonads are showing again."

"Ah. yes." he said, "To quote Charcot: 'C'Est
toujour la chose genitale, toujours,' et cetera,
-- But is it love, my love, or merely symbiosis?"
(For we have heard of love, are sure that it exists,
or lust, or habit ...)

We had coffee (poor) and talked some more.
There's always some new Russian poet,
or a painter who's abandoned his old style,
another war, or riot, or new dance step,
or the latest thing in Centaurs,
half-man-half-motorcycle...

And yet, back home there was a couple,
I remember, married sixty years.
They rocked on their green porch.
Years before they'd lost a daughter, someone said,
in childbed. And a son in WWII.
In May they carried flowers to the graves.
They had eaten sixty thousand meals together.
lain together twenty thousand nights.
Their faces looked like parchment maps
of the same territory. Once I caught them
holding claws on their green porch.
They almost never talked.

We talk. There's always some new ruling on
pornography, and one more "poignant" Broadway play;
every day another lion stuffed with newsprint,
and the latest book debunking yesterday's ...

We talk. And our talk, if I may be immodest,
is amusing. We are well-informed, of course,
and bright. Our management of language
at times amounts to brilliance. And as we spar
above the clarets and the coffee cups
lying empty on an unchecked tablecloth,
I am aware that we are very clever,
that we are nothing if not clever.

-- Phyllis Onstott Arone

Logansport, Indiana